



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE

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Press Release – For Immediate Release – April 7, 2005

Mississippi Strawberries Create “Sweet” Deal for Wal-Mart in Flowood and Hattiesburg

Allen Eubanks has proven to be an innovative thinker from an extraordinary farming family. As farm manager of Eubanks Produce in Lucedale, Mississippi, Allen has greatly expanded the family operation and developed lucrative business relationships around North America. Although much of the most recent success of the business has been in part of Allen’s initiatives, it has been the combination of the three generations that preceded him that allowed the farm to evolve into one of the most flourishing operations in Mississippi.

What started out in the early 1900’s as a 200-acre row crop production site with sheep and cattle, Eubanks Produce Farm has now become a 1,000-acre all around production site with over 20 crops to offer. Such diversity in the fruit and vegetable production include peppers, tomatoes, watermelons, cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers, and most recently – strawberries. With shipments of his reputable products already headed for Canada and most of the United States, it is the strawberry production sector that is currently earning Eubanks much respect and profitability here in the Southeast.

In a coordinated effort with the Wal-Mart buying team, Eubanks Produce will begin the shipment of red, luscious Mississippi grown strawberries to over 50 Wal-Marts in Mississippi and its surrounding states. Consumers can now purchase the 1-pound clamshell of strawberries at any Wal-Mart Supercenter in Mississippi. Wal-Mart regional buyers and produce agents are to be commended for seeking local product for Mississippi customers. The agreement between Wal-Mart and Eubanks Produce will compliment both the growers as well as the state in producing a top quality product the consumer will thoroughly enjoy.

This recent, large-scale agreement did not come overnight, but rather grew from a developmental plan that spanned seven years. Along with the Wal-Mart Produce Regional Buyer, Doug Reynolds, Eubanks Produce started marketing their strawberries in two stores in Mississippi the first year. The store number doubled as the years progressed until every store in Mississippi carried the tasty berries. As Reynolds said, “We crawled before we walked, but now we’re at a run!”

Reynolds encourages his buying team to work with a regional program and buy local as often as possible. Wal-Mart knows that this not only supports the local farming communities, but it also brings fresher produce to the Wal-Mart consumers in each area. Allen Eubanks knew the effect the quality of his fresh produce had when consumers requested the Eubanks strawberries by name and accepted nothing less than Mississippi grown.

An in-store promotion will be held on April 7, 2005 at the Flowood Wal-Mart and on April 14, 2005, at the Hattiesburg Wal-Mart. The weeklong event, at the pinnacle of strawberry season, is the first large-scale promotion for Mississippi-grown strawberries in Wal-Mart. The product will be showcased as customers first enter the store and will be labeled "Make Mine Mississippi." Along with recipe cards, preparation and handling tips, and nutritional and health benefits, strawberries can be sampled along with other various processed strawberry products. Commissioner of Agriculture Lester Spell will kick-off the event along with Mayor Johnny L. DuPree of Hattiesburg, representatives from the Wal-Mart buying team, and Eubanks Produce Farm.



